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INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KYIV 000092

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/18/2020

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: TOUGH MATH FOR TYMOSHENKO  
FOR SECOND ROUND

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft for reasons 1.4(b,d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) Runoff candidates Viktor Yanukovych and PM Yuliya Tymoshenko are reaching out to second-tier candidates and their constituencies for support in the February 7 second round of presidential voting, following the January 17 first round. Yanukovych expressed his willingness to incorporate the policies of these candidates into his platform, but MPs from his party thought it unlikely that third-place finisher Serhiy Tihipko would formally back anyone in the runoff. Regions contacts were convinced that Yanukovych's campaign does not need to make any major changes to win on February 7. Tymoshenko may meet with Tihipko soon, is making changes to her campaign leadership, and will sharpen her personal attacks on Yanukovych, according to MPs from her bloc. Local analysts predict that, although Tymoshenko is still very much in the fight, it will be difficult for her to overcome Yanukovych's lead unless she can win over a majority of Tigipko voters and energize traditional Orange voters depressed by attacks on her from President Yushchenko and others. Meanwhile, Georgian observers denied accreditation for the first-round election told the Ambassador that they plan to return for the runoff. End Summary.

YANUKOVYCH: KEEP DOING WHAT WE ARE DOING

12. (C) Party of Regions (Regions) Deputy faction leader and MP Volodymyr Makeyenko told us that party head Viktor Yanukovych is pleased with the first-round outcome. He said that a double-digit lead (note: with 99.9 percent of the vote counted, Yanukovych leads PM Yuliya Tymoshenko by 10.3 percent) was psychologically important because it made a Yanukovych victory seem assured and would discourage potential Tymoshenko voters in Western Ukraine. Makeyenko said that Regions was reaching out to the other candidates and that Yanukovych was "sure to get the backing" of Communist leader Petro Symonenko and Rada Speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn. Regions MP Yuriy Miroshnychenko thought that it was unlikely that third-place finisher Serhiy Tihipko would formally back either Yanukovych or Tymoshenko, but that his voters in the east and south would vote for Yanukovych anyway. The campaign had gone well overall, according to Miroshnychenko, and "we just need to keep doing what we are doing."

13. (U) Yanukovych on January 18 said that he was willing to work with other candidates committed to political stability and economic revival and to incorporate their ideas into his policy platform. In a possible effort to reach out to some of these candidates' electorate, Yanukovych released a statement on his website on "Ukraine's European path" and pledged to lead a "strong, independent Ukraine" into Europe. Yanukovych explained that Ukraine will join Europe as "a partner, not a servant."

14. (SBU) Tymoshenko is also reaching out to other candidates and their constituencies. Tymoshenko Bloc (BYuT) MP Serhiy Sobolev announced January 19 that Tymoshenko would likely meet with Tihipko later that day to try to win his backing for her candidacy. He also said that Tymoshenko was negotiating with fourth-place finisher Arseniy Yatsenyuk. BYuT MP Serhiy Mishchenko told reporters on January 19 that Tihipko was demanding the Prime Minister's post and half of all cabinet positions in return for his support. Political analysts tell us they doubt that Tihipko would want to take on the Prime Ministership without having any MPs of his own behind him -- and at a time when the PM will have to undertake unpopular economic measures. Rather, they assert, he is looking toward pre-term parliamentary elections. This would put him more in line with Yanukovych, who also favors them. Deputy PM Nemyria's Chief of Staff, Igor Zhovka, told us that he hoped most Tihipko voters, who tend to be better educated and from the bigger cities, were "too smart" to vote for Yanukovych.

15. (C) BYuT MP Ostap Semerak told us that the Tymoshenko campaign was disappointed with the election results, adding that the first-round goal had been to keep Yanukovych's lead to no more than six percent. He said Tymoshenko knows she has a tough fight ahead and is busy replacing regional campaign heads whose election outcomes failed to meet

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expectations. Semerak explained that one of the key campaign messages prior to the February 7 second round will be "Yanukovych's biography." He said they would focus on his "criminal past" and his ties to "oligarchs and corruption." This message would accomplish two things: first, dissuade backers of second-tier candidates from supporting Yanukovych; and second, mobilize voters in Western Ukraine to vote for Tymoshenko. Semerak said the message could be summarized for voters as a choice between voting "for Ukraine" or for "a convict."

ANALYSTS, POLLS GIVE TYMOSHENKO LOW ODDS

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16. (C) Ukrainian political analyst Oleksiy Haran told us that none of the second-tier candidates is likely to endorse Tymoshenko for the second round, even though supporters of President Yushchenko, Yatsenyuk, and Anatoliy Hrytsenko are a natural part of her electorate. He said that the "demobilization" of Yatsenyuk and Yushchenko voters in particular would make it difficult for her to bridge the gap with Yanukovych. Volodymyr Fesenko, Director of the PENTA analytic center, explained that if even a third of Yatsenyuk and Yushchenko voters stay home on February 7, it will be impossible for her to win. He said that she must convince these voters, who do not like her, that she is the "lesser of two evils." Fesenko said that for Tymoshenko to triumph, the "Tihipko factor" would have to split in her favor; without the bulk of his voters she cannot overcome Yanukovych's lead.

17. (U) Ukrainian daily Segodnya published new data on January 18 from ICTV's first-round election exit poll, which showed voters preferring Yanukovych over Tymoshenko 44.1 to 37.5 percent in the second round. INTER Television's exit poll gave Yanukovych a 5.6 percent lead in the second round, with voters favoring him 44.1 to 38.5 percent over Tymoshenko. ICTV's data shows a majority of Tihipko and Symonenko voters backing Yanukovych, along with almost a third of Yatsenyuk voters. Tymoshenko would get two-thirds of Yatsenyuk voters and 85 percent of Yushchenko supporters.

18. (C) The Ambassador was visited on January 19 by Georgian MP Givi Targamadze and former Georgian CEC Chairman Tarkhnishvili, who explained the situation with the largely aborted Georgian attempt to observe the January 17 balloting in Donetsk Oblast. After the Georgians had been denied accreditation by the Ukrainian CEC, they had appealed to the courts and won. Thinking that the Ukrainian CEC would accept the court ruling, 300 Georgian observers had departed for Donetsk just before election day. Once they arrived, they learned that the CEC had appealed the court ruling and was not going to accredit the Georgians as observers in time for the first-round balloting. The Georgians consulted with their lawyers, who said they could get accredited as journalists. They found a local newspaper called "Molodaya Gvardiya" that was willing to sponsor them, and received their journalistic accreditation.

19. (C) According to Tarkhnishvili, however, the local authorities allowed only some of the Georgians into polling stations, and in some cases sent in police to remove them, sometimes using physical force. In particular, said Tarkhnishvili, the authorities worked to remove all Georgian observers from polling places by 1800, and he alleged that there was a suspicious surge in voting (20% of total turnout) in the last two hours of polling after the Georgian observers had been removed. He also said the Georgians had spotted six minivans carrying voters around to different polling stations for "carousel" voting. He said that Georgia will send observers for the second round if they can get accreditation as monitors, and will send them to various parts of Ukraine rather than focusing exclusively on Donetsk.

COMMENT

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110. (C) While the race is far from over, the math favors Yanukovych. We can expect Tymoshenko to continue to go sharply negative on Yanukovych as she seeks to mobilize traditionally Orange voters. Key variables between now and February 7 will be traditional Orange voter turnout and the way Tigipko's voters (13%) break. If, as polling now indicates, they break 60-40 in favor of Yanukovych, it is difficult to see how Tymoshenko can bridge the ten percent

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gap. Embassy will also watch the potential for the Tymoshenko campaign to build a case of fraud against Yanukovych (justified or not) to throw the election to the courts. We will also track the corresponding buildup by the Yanukovych camp of a street and legal campaign to combat such a move.

TEFFT